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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MASSIE).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 17, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable THOMAS MASSIE to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

EFFECTS OF SEQUESTRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, for civilian defense employees at Pax River Naval Air Station, Webster Field, and the Naval Surface Warfare Center at Indian Head, all of which I represent—and Mr. JONES, who is on the floor, represents a substantial number as well in his district—sequestration hit home last week as furloughs began. The same is true of 650,000 civilian defense workers throughout our country.

The furloughs brought on by the irrational policy of sequestration are

harming our national security and putting our military readiness at risk. At the same time, they also represent a severe 20 percent pay cut in the form of days when they are forced to stay home without pay, forbidden even from volunteering to continue performing their important tasks.

Federal employees, including those in civilian defense positions, have already contributed \$114 billion over the last 3 years for the next 7 years toward deficit reduction from pay freezes and changes in retirement benefits. These are hardworking, dedicated men and women who only want to serve their country and make a difference.

As I said on this floor last week, I went to Pax River 2 weeks ago to meet with many of those preparing to be furloughed. I heard their concerns about the sequester's effects on the missions of our men and women in uniform whom these civilian employees support.

We have men and women at the point of this spear, but we have a lot of men and women who are making sure that they can be as effective and as safe as possible at the point of that spear. And I heard from them about how the sequester is affecting morale on and off base.

What I did not hear much at all from those employees was concern for themselves, about how furloughs will impact their own families. That's because their number one concern, even facing an undeserved 20 percent pay cut, is still their ability to serve and get the job done for our troops and all of us who depend on a strong national defense.

After my meeting with civilian defense employees from Maryland's Fifth District, I received an email message from an employee at Webster Field. He wrote this:

We pride ourselves in not only delivering a quality product but on being responsive to the emergent needs of our soldiers and sailors around the world.

He went on to say:

If our dedicated folks are told to turn the lights off and lock the doors at 4 p.m. on a Thursday, then who will provide that level of responsiveness our military counterparts have so desperately come to expect and rely on when no one is here to respond to the call on Friday? What message does that send to the civilians and contractors who have made it their mission to ensure our military never goes without critical equipment, data, and training they need?

He goes on to say:

I genuinely worry that it devalues the level of effort that our employees have put forth. And when you're losing your pay and your work appears to be less important, it will become much harder to retain a lot of these very talented folk.

Not my words, Mr. Speaker, but the words of one of America's many selfless public servants who are concerned about this dangerous sequester.

What will it take for Congress to act?

We've also seen air combat units grounded, and some classes at the Naval Academy this fall could be canceled if sequester continues. The only way to reverse these effects, Mr. Speaker, on our military readiness and training is to replace the sequester with a big and balanced alternative.

Budget Committee Ranking Member CHRIS VAN HOLLEN has proposed a balanced alternative seven times, but the majority has not allowed us to consider a balanced plan on this floor. If we had, on this floor, an alternative to the sequester that achieves real deficit reduction—which we know we need—through a balance of revenues and targeted spending cuts, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the majority of us, Republican and Democrat, would come together and would support it. It's time for Speaker BOEHNER to appoint budget conferees so that House and Senate negotiators can begin to reach agreement on a balanced compromise.

I will continue, Mr. Speaker, to call on both parties to listen to the men and women of Pax River, of Webster

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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